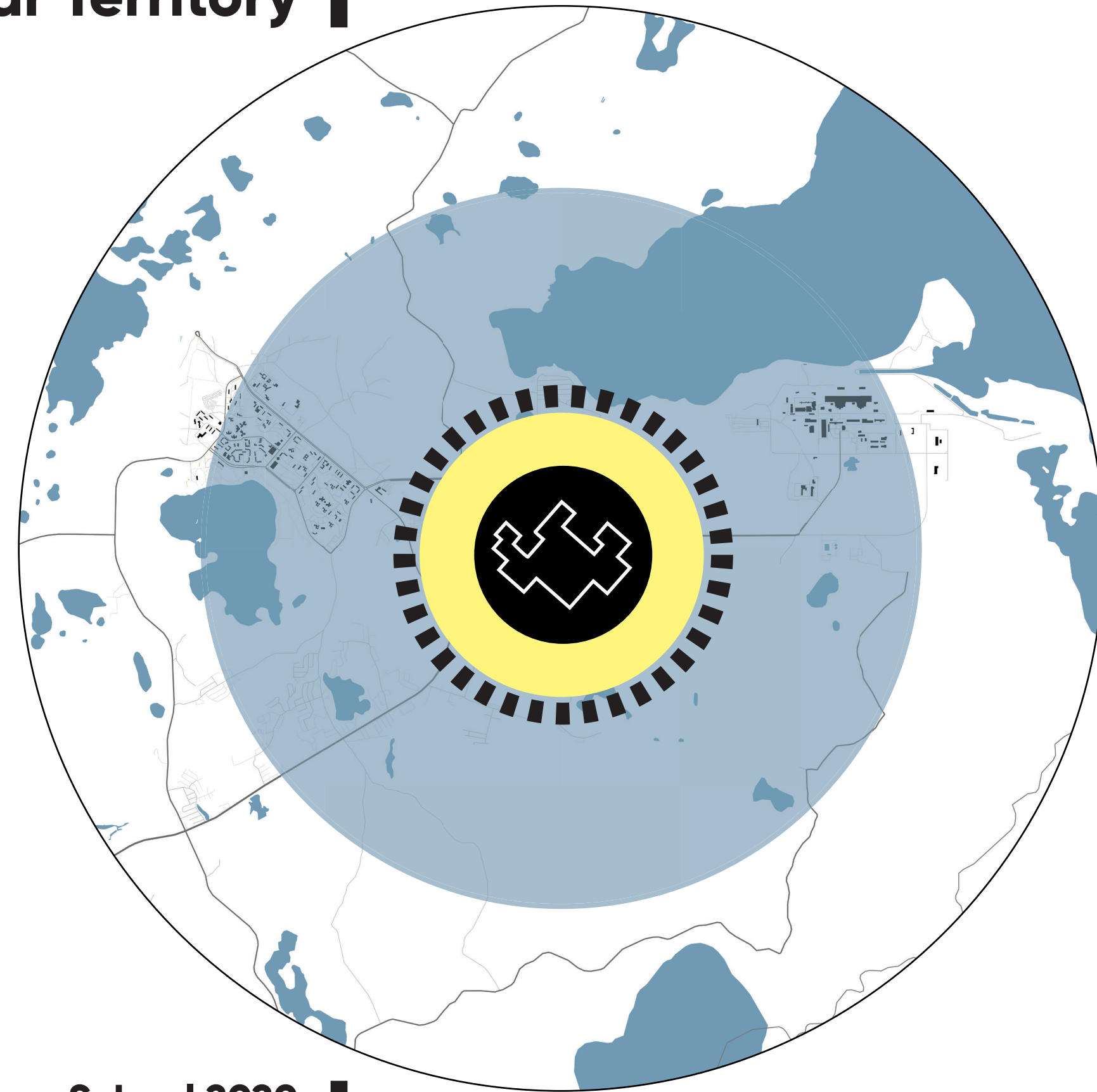# Visaginas Library Visions

Knowledge Core: Futures for a Post-Nuclear Territory

Post-Nuclear Urbanism Summer School 2020
September 3-14 Visaginas

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Post-Nuclear Urbanism

Background

The 2020 summer school was a ten day workshop based in Visaginas, where urban conditions specific to the town's 'post-nuclear' status were discussed in dialogue with future plans for its municipal library.

Constructed during the 1970s and 1980s, Visaginas was designed from scratch as a satellite town for the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP). INPP itself was one of four nodes forming the Soviet Union's North-West United Power System – alongside Leningrad, Chernobyl and Smolensk. When Lithuania regained independence in 1991 the future of INPP became a national question, and serious concerns were raised over its safety – the plant's RBMK reactors were the same as those used at Chernobyl. INPP's fate was ultimately decided when Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004. The EU made clear that decommissioning was a non-negotiable condition of membership, and by 2009 both reactor units had been shut down.

The closure of INPP is a complex process of unprecedented scale, forecast to last until 2038. For Visaginas this means a protracted period of transition whereby the plant still offers some local employment, but a reorientation of economic outlook is imperative. By characterising the urban context as 'post-nuclear' we mean to imply a nuanced and evolving condition, whereby the future of the community is neither wholly defined by nor decoupled from its nuclear roots.

2020 Project

Building upon the work of previous summer schools, participants in 2020 continued to explore the concept of 'knowledge infrastructures' and its relevance to the specific context of Visaginas. This term provides a broad analytical framework for examining what sustains different forms of knowledge production, and the effects of rapid digitalization. In the case of Visaginas, it helped us to foreground two major issues. First, the former highly centralised role of INPP in municipal governance and it influence upon local knowledge practices. Second, the legacy of that nuclear knowledge base: its continued relevance and strategies for adapting to 'post-nuclear' and digitalising realities.

As in former summer schools, Visaginas' municipal library formed the institutional anchor for these wide-ranging questions. Our specific contribution was to respond to more recent local proposals for updating and relocating the library. This would see services that are currently split between two sites brought under one roof within the town's first micro-rayon. We chose to combine discussion of the library's functional programming with wider debates concerning the new site's architectural heritage, the future of the town archive and the museum that could be built around it. The following document is structured as three thematic chapters that highlight the main aspects of our collective and multi-disciplinary approach, in dialogue with local stakeholders. Each foregrounds a strategy for negotiating common ground between different understandings of the town's past, as part of the negotiation of its future:

1. Foundations
2. Architecture and the Archive
3. Knowledge Infrastructures

1. Foundations

The course started with getting to know the town and the library first hand. Method-
ologically, this was based upon numerous site visits and interviews with local actors,
supported by online lectures with international academics and practitioners mostly
familiar with the context of Visaginas.

There were roughly two phases to this process. First, we were introduced to the town
more generally, addressing its 'post-nuclear' status from historical, economic, and
social angles. Second, we started to focus on the library more directly. We ques-
tioned how the institution is currently used, and in which ways its appeal might be
broadened.

Together these phases made clear a need for institutions to mediate between dif-
ferent generational outlooks, experimenting with how continuity and innovation can
be sensitively combined. Our first response to this perceived need was practices of
'zoning' at different scales. First, we mapped a confluence of prominent urban rela-
tions relevant to the immediate context of the new library. Second, we considered
how the functional programming of the library might best accommodate these re-
lations alongside the feedback gathered from interviews. Our aim was both to map
the existing situation and to propose new zoning strategies adaptable to communi-
ty change and shifts in knowledge practices.

Phases One & Two

Map of site visits and institutional representation

On-site interview
Phase One

On-site interview beyond the map

On-site interview
Phase Two

Visited without on-site interview.

Guided walk

Interview at location other than place of work

Online lecture

'Phase one' started from the question: "How is Visaginas' nuclear specialization being conversed now?" In response we met with local entrepreneurs, representatives of INPP, and Visaginas Business and Tourism Incubator. We were also given a guided tour of the town's architectural history.

'Phase two' posed two principle questions: "How is the notion of 'knowledge infrastructures' helpful to program Visaginas' urban development?" and "Which new functions need to be programmed for Visaginas Public Library?" Site visits and interviews focused on key cultural institutions, and were supported by a series of online discussions with international theorists and practitioners. This helped us to better understand the existing situation both from the perspective of Visaginas itself, and via relevant case studies from elsewhere.

Throughout, tutor Siarhei Liubimau provided talks establishing the aims of the summer school, as well as introducing the work and methodologies of former groups between 2015 and 2019.

Phase One	Victor N. Shevaldin	Martynas Germanavičius	Irina Morozova	Yevgeny Shuklin	Gintautas Dervinis	Anton Evtiuchov	
Phase Two	Andrejus Vergejenko	Miodrag Kuč	Paulina Budryte	Oksana Denisenko	Aleksei Urazov	Radek Toman	Asta Vonderau

Business and Tourism Incubator
Oksana Denisenko

Cultural Centre

Third Age University

Former Kindergarten Proposed Site of New Library

Visaginas Technology and Business Training Center
Gintautas Dervinis

Existing Library
Andrejus Vergejenko

INPP Control Simulator (LOK)
Victor N. Shevaldin

INPP Information Centre
Jurgita Norvaišienė

Environmental Monitoring Centre
Vladimir Vlaskin

Tochka Art Residency
Aleksei Urazov

Domino Shopping Mall

Visaginas Architectural Tour
Martynas Germanavičius

Business Incubator (Former director)
Irina Morozova

'We Are Visaginas' (Founder)
Yevgeny Shuklin

LitWild (Founder)
Anton Evtiuchov

'Urban Furniture as Knowledge Infrastructure Visaginas Knowledge Park Beyond Learning'
Miodrag Kuč

"Public Participation in Urban Planning in Lithuanian Context"
Paulina Budryte

'Library as Social Space From Architect's Perspective'
Radek Toman

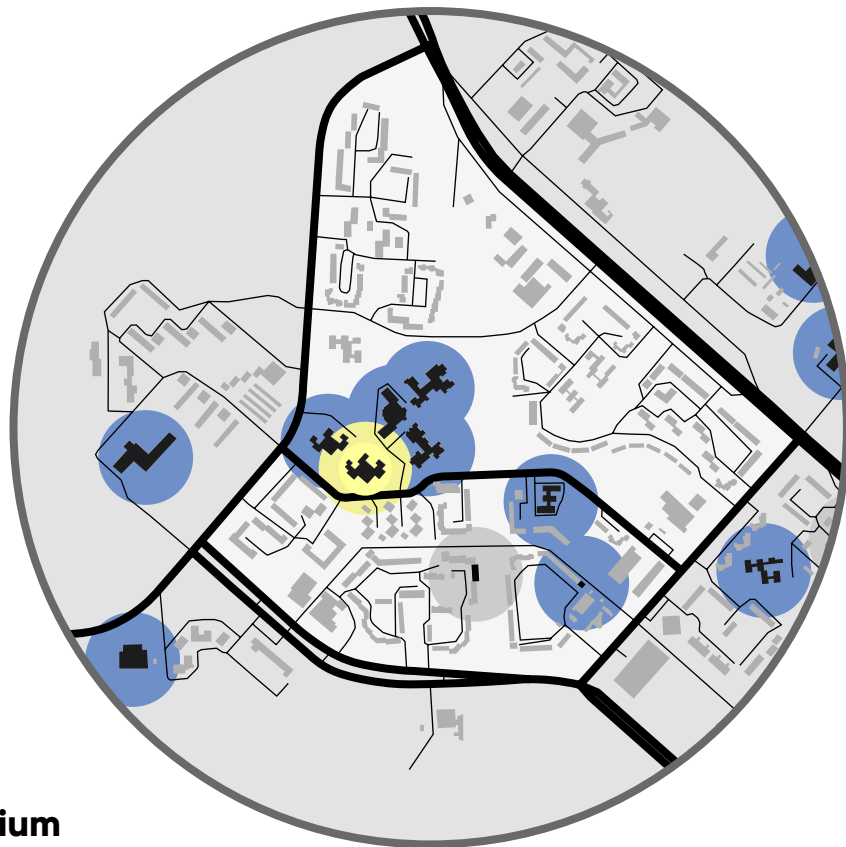**Scaling the Cloud: Making the Infrastructure In Sweden**
Asta Vonderau

Zoning: First District

Through mapping educational institutions in Visaginas we noted a cluster in the first and oldest district where the new library is to be located. It is important to note that the town's gradually shifting demographic composition will likely increase demand for educational infrastructures in the coming decade.

Map of Educational Instiutions

Nursery
School
Kindergarten
Third Age University

Art School
Technology and Business Training Centre

Gymnasium & Ethnography Museum
Sports Centre
Current Library
Gymnasium

Sports School
Proposed New Library
Cultural Centre

Current Library
House of Creativity
Tochka

Kindergarten
Youth Centre
School
Nursery
School

'Knowledge Core'

We dubbed this cluster Visaginas' 'Knowledge Core'. Our aim was to highlight how a concentrated educational zone with the library at its centre could serve as a dynamic forum for discussing the community's future, and, more specifically, how its educational base should adapt to best serve that vision.
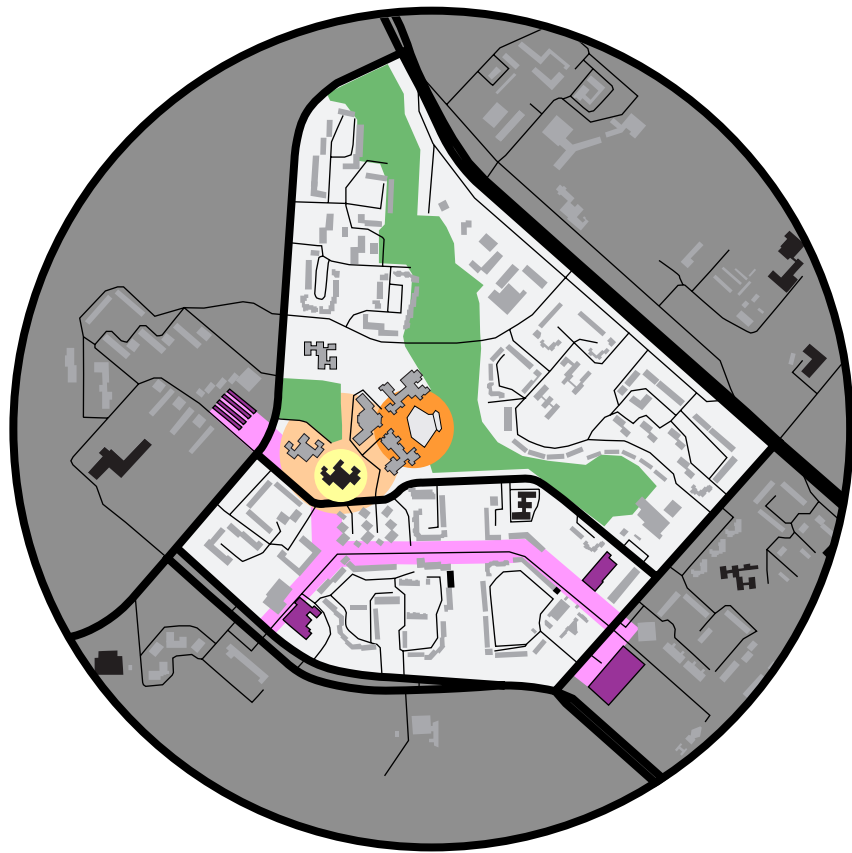
Social: Locals already identify the open space in front of the Sports Centre and the school as a prominent meeting point for younger people, whilst the cultural centre and third-age university, adjacent to the Library, are well-used by older generations. As a new 'member' to this social hub, the Library could form a cross-generational forum, striking a balance between its traditional functions and calls for innovation. How to establish common ground will be a key focus of our work.

Commercial: Sedulinos Alley was originally planned as a key artery where most of the town's shops were located. Today commercial activity has been significantly reoriented through the development of supermarkets and a shopping mall along Veteranų Street. Developing the 'Knowledge Core' may, in turn, help encourage revitalized use of Sedulinos Alley, perhaps as a hub for smaller businesses and initiatives by younger members of the community. The library's new location would make it an approachable site, and we propose integration of a café to broaden interaction with the institution.

Green: The line between the town and surrounding nature has always been somewhat blurred. The ideal of 'integrating' natural and built environments by situating Visaginas within existing forest was questionable, however, construction workers (who were also citizens) tried to minimize the destruction of existing nature. Today trees form a key structural feature of the town alongside its eclectic array of apartment blocks, a fact citizens are proud of. The new library is surrounded by substantial outdoor space, and we propose thinking the institution beyond its built form both to diversify the knowledge practices it supports, and to highlight a distinctive urban characteristic of Visaginas.

Zoning Elements

Social

School
Sports Centre
Third Age University
Cultural Centre
New Library

Open-air stage: popular gathering point, and former site of 'Cosmos' play equipment

Commercial

Market
New Library
Lidl Supermarket
Ikl Supermarket
Sedulinos Alley
Domino Shopping Mall

Green

Kindergarten and potential site of new museum
New Library

Zoning: Library

More detailed discussion of the library's functional programming combined observations of the existing situation, with ideas generated from actors calling for cultural change in Visaginas. Online discussions with international architects familiar with Visaginas helped us to envisage how different ideas of what a library could or should provide might be combined. We were keen to consider both 'integration' and 'distance' as ways to diversify the knowledge practices supported by the same institutional space.

Reception	Reading Room	Computer Room
Book Storage	Exhibition Space	Town Archive Material

Existing Library Functions

The existing library already supports many needs in a traditional format that staff are proud of. Computer classrooms are used by older citizens, the unemployed, and sometimes gamers, who benefit from free access and a social setting. An imaginatively designed kids learning corner has been carefully illustrated by members of the third age university. There is a small exhibition and events space, and important elements of the town archive.

Word Pool

mirroring
Alexandria
zombifiaction
up-to-date
browsing
researching
intimidated
co-work
fantasy
cosy
disability
(un)employment
gender
networking
social
gaming
introversion
silencing

Word Pool

We discussed the library and other forms of knowledge infrastructure with local cultural actors. We then pooled together the words they used to describe the current situation and their hopes for the future (here we have illustrated only a sample). The aim was to observe possible relations between terms without boxing them into pre-existing functional categories, thereby keeping an open mind in our own design work.

'Zoning Butterfly'

We noted that differences of opinion as to the future character of the library often reflected broader generational divides and changes in knowledge practices. The library is rarely visited by teenagers or young professionals, and could certainly broaden the content and format of the information offered without alienating existing users. The butterfly motif - famously used for Visaginas' town plan - became a central metaphor for our own planning approach. We tried to think in terms of a delicate balance between four distinct zones forming one whole.

Kids' Corner

The current library has impressive amounts of kid's space which can be maintained as a natural transition between 'traditional' and 'new' zones.

Ground Floor:
Bookshelves, 'story corner ', active learning stations.
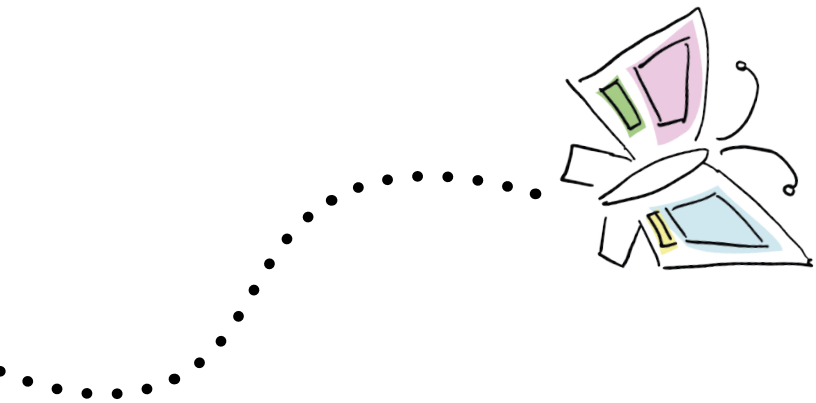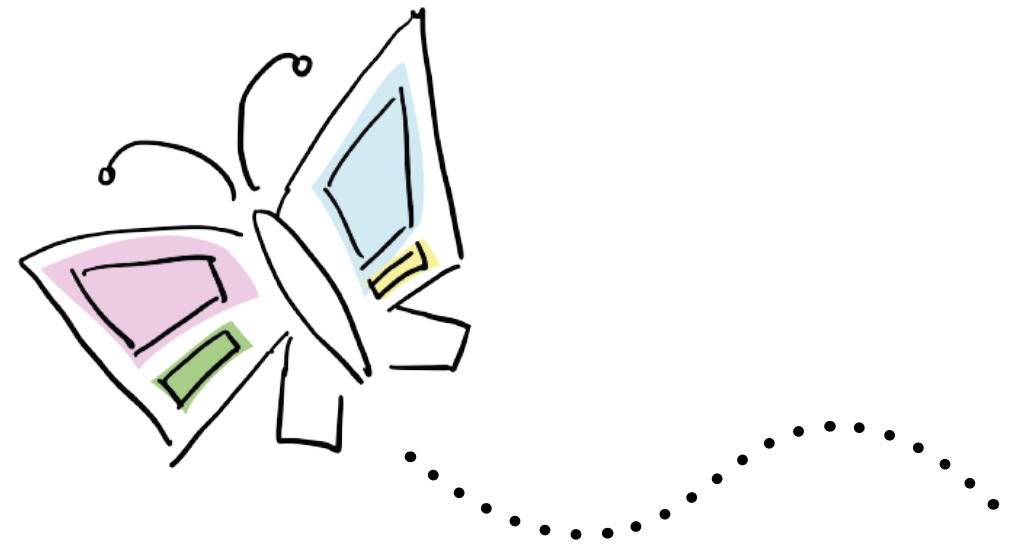
'New' Library Space

Visaginas has large amounts of cultural space, however we noted a lack of contemporary work space capable of facilitating co-working, or the flexible hours which benefit students and young professionals (who may be working long-distance and across time zones). Integrating a café could provide an informal environment for meetings, study sessions, and socializing. Expanding literature relevant to the above target groups, perhaps through online subscriptions, would also help broaden the library's appeal.
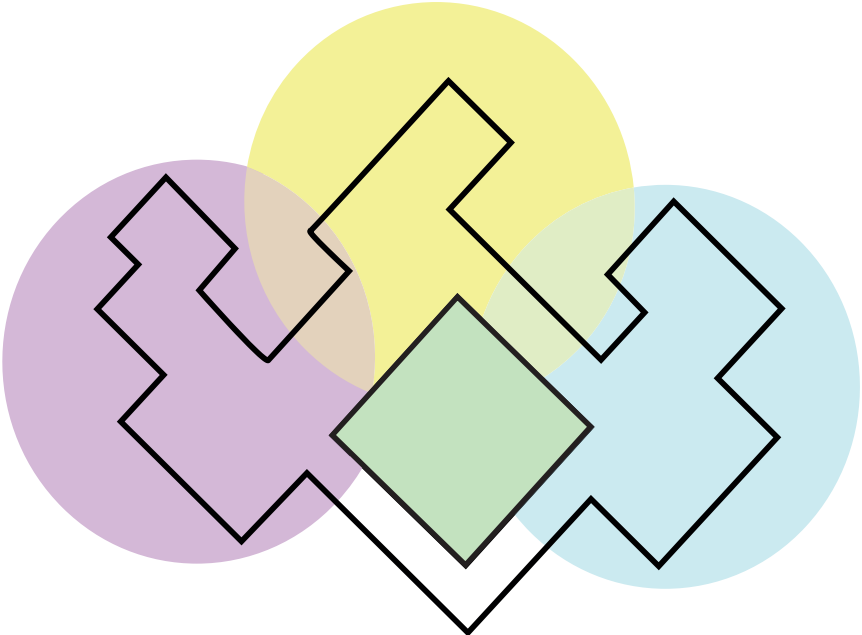
Ground Floor:
Café, access to digital library, board games, free zone & relaxed semi-social environment with medium noise levels.

First Floor:
Meeting rooms, professional working space (24/7 access?), quiet reading rooms.

Exterior Space

Currently all library functions are interior. We envision an open courtyard at the library's centre as a meeting point between the zones that, due to noise levels and spatial organisation, may otherwise require a degree of separation. In this way it would reflect a major characteristic of the town itself: pride in Visaginas' proximity to nature is a point in common between those with otherwise differing opinions on municipal life.

'Traditional' Library Space

Whilst innovations may be required to attract younger users, securing the library's future, they should be carefully integrated with the services existing users enjoy. We propose maintaining a degree of separation from the new semi-social zone and many of its existing functions. However, public services should, where possible, be concentrated on the ground floor for universal access.

Ground Floor:
Library reception desk, reading space, bookshelves for browsing, computer room.

First Floor:
Administrative offices, storage (including city archive?).

2. Architecture and the Archive

The proposed site for the new library is that of a former kindergarten located on Vilties street, designed by architect Dalia Matukonytè it was one of the first buildings constructed in the town and forms a clear architectural pair with its neighbour. The future of the building – currently unused, apart from a charity shop located by its front entrance – has become a highly contentious issue within the community. Some argue that it is a unique feature of the town's distinctive architectural heritage which should be preserved exactly in its original form, others favour demolition and the construction of a smaller, more energy efficient replacement.

Understood as a contested memory site, the former kindergarten implicates wider debates as to what constitutes Visaginas' heritage. The fact that many of the locals who built the town still live there, gives strong support for material continuity and an intimate sense of ownership over the past. However, for many Lithuanians, Visaginas represents a hermetic urban insertion symbolic of political occupation, complicating the status of the town's heritage within wider national discourses.

We advocate that questions of the library's functional programming could and should be developed in careful dialogue with the existing architecture. In this way the library can serve as both focal point and forum for the ongoing work of establishing a comprehensive municipal archive – perhaps even as a seed for the town museum. In sum, architecture is not only a container for knowledge practices, but is itself a material means of developing a nuanced and questioning relationship to the past. Critically, this is not only a retroactive process, but a means for opening to diverse narratives for the future.

How to Approach the Site?

As a 'new town' anchored to a decommissioned power plant slowly being dismantled, our initial encounter with Visaginas was framed by a striking contrast: construction vs. demolition. However, as evident from our conversations with locals, life in Visaginas is perhaps best characterised some place between these polarities. This is especially so for younger generations, who retain strong ties to their town's nuclear roots, but who must also look beyond these foundations. We approached the architecture of the former kindergarten as a material component of these complex and evolving relations between the past and the future. Could its architectural present provide a conscious meeting place for shifting temporalities?

Observation

We spent time at the site of the new library observing the distinctive character of the existing architecture. Unable to gain access to the building itself, we visited its neighbour to get a better idea of its interior (although it should be noted that these spaces are not identical).

The building invites 360 degree engagement. Its distinctive form creates a dynamic space of shifting character, transitioning from intimate corners to angles pushing out into the surrounding space. This compliments our aim of integrating a variety of 'zones', supporting different ways of sharing the same institutional site.

Characteristic of Visaginas, the building is surrounded by lots of green space, with trees a strong structural feature.

We were impressed by the interior of its neighbour. Lots of natural light is provided by skylights above a large open space at the building's core, framed on all sides by a first floor balcony. This seems to serve as a communal anchor point for the numerous different groups who use the building. A large staircase contours between the two levels.


Analysis

Having noted distinctive features of the existing architecture, we started to experiment with how these forms might simultaneously be maintained and adapted, exploring a compromise between the two dominant, and currently conflicting, visions of the site: preservation of heritage and reduction in built volume.

Cutting or inverting existing forms can be a way to allow the architecture to adapt whilst maintaining the outline of the original design. We imagined cutting a courtyard space in the centre of the new library that echoes the open-plan core of it neighbour, enhancing the qualities of light and community we perceived as strengths. This solution would also sustain a clear twinned relationship between the two buildings.
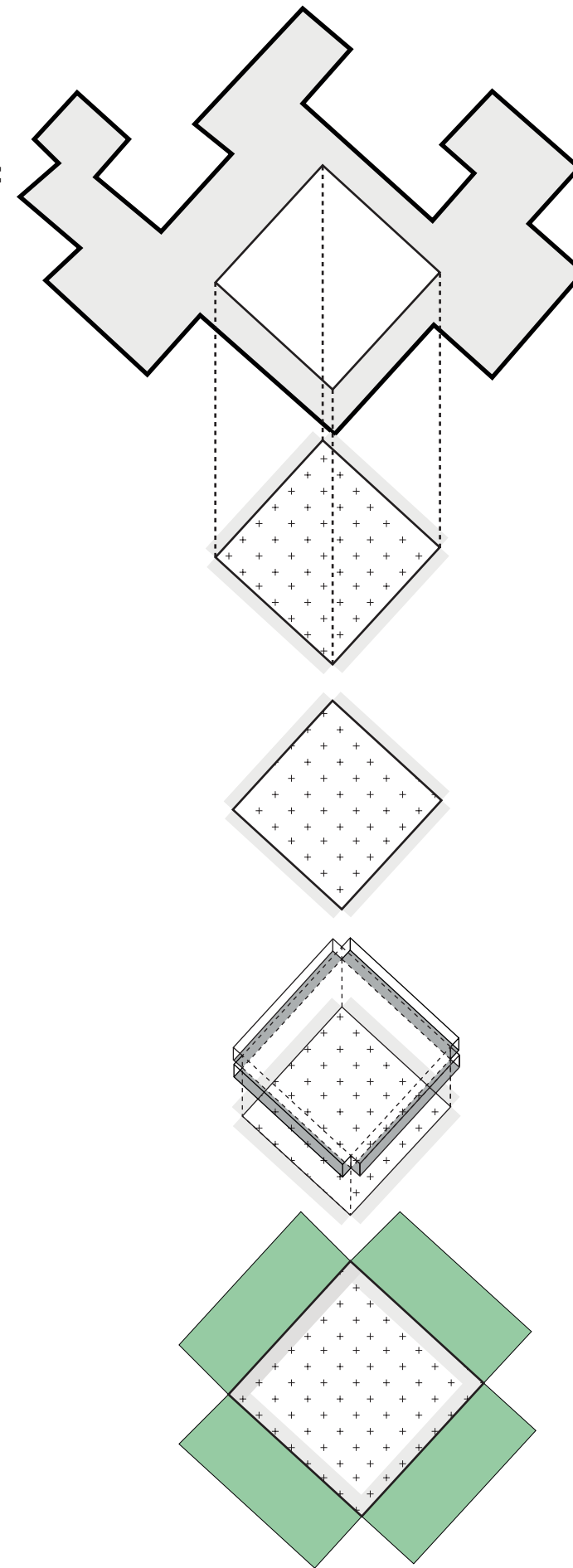

Vision

Drafting architectural sketches enabled us to further explore what our initial ideas could mean for the building as a whole. Cutting out the central atrium would increase natural light throughout the building. Removing the ground floor from the front corner would open this courtyard space up to the street. However, retaining the first floor level would preserve the footprint of the original building.
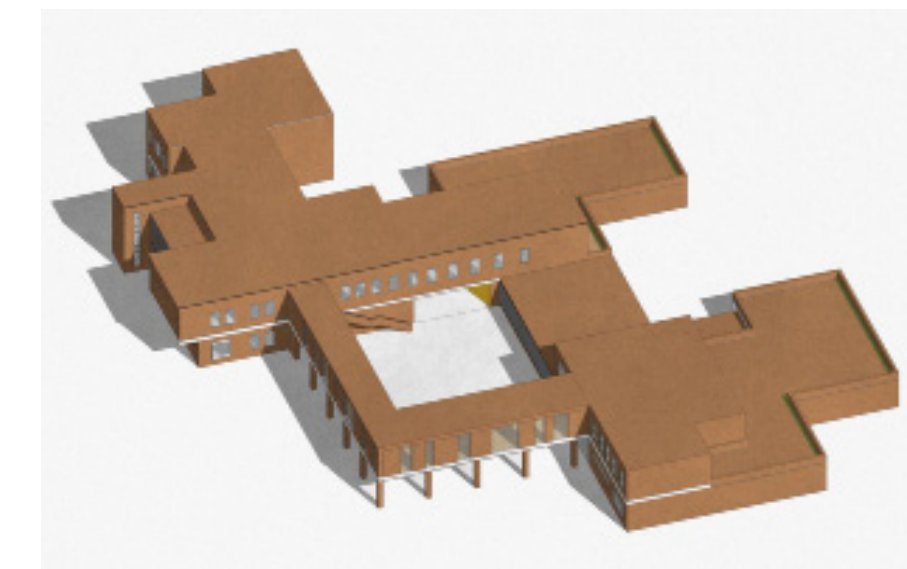
Resulting in a form of balcony, this could be transformed from a simple corridor into a quiet reading room. The use of pillars at the base of the balcony mimics the structural form of trees throughout the town. It also articulates the courtyard as a zone somewhere between interior and exterior, further gradating the spaces available for library users.
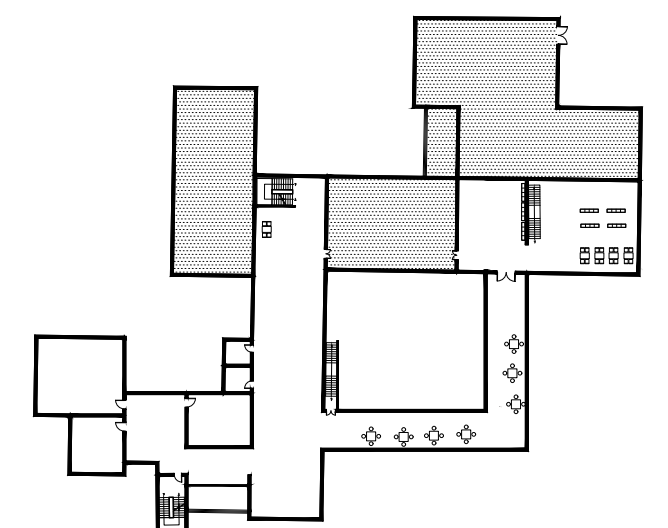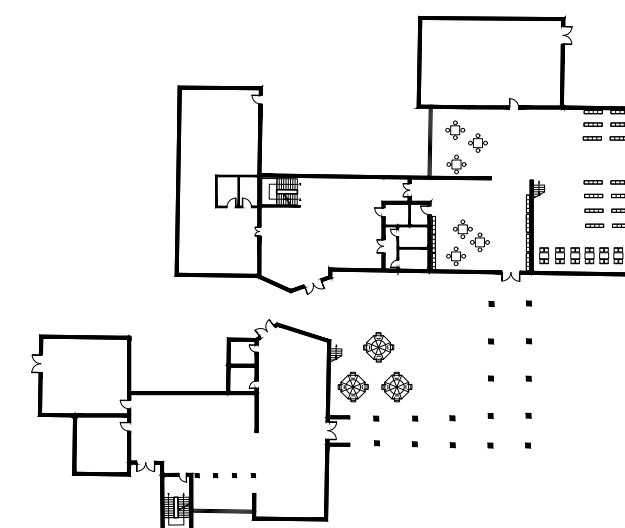
Knowledge Nodes

Central to our architectural proposition was the development of a multilayered space where the building and surrounding plot were not treated as two distinct units, but rather as part of a gradated whole. As such, we started to pay attention not only to the architecture but various abandoned elements surrounding it: flower beds, metal play equipment, and wall fragments. These elements could be retained and reimagined as extensions of the library's knowledge infrastructures.

Existing Green Space

We characterised this external furniture as 'knowledge nodes', focal points for critically examining knowledge production and preservation in a 'digital era'. It could also serve to anchor participatory workshops, exploring heritage as an ongoing inter-generational dialogue. Our hope is that this would support the already diverse approaches to archiving and narrative formation we observed in the town. Also extend the library's institutional reach by engaging non-users, without undermining the quieter knowledge practices situated within.

Photos from Town Archive

Environment

We noticed former flower beds left unused about the building, and imagined them as small geodesic greenhouses where children could learn about climate, and the ways in which network thinking has played an important role in constructing our notion of the 'environment'.

In Visaginas there is strong emphasis on the town's proximity to nature, environmental monitoring is an essential component of INPP's safety practices, and the technical college is renowned for its mechatronics programme. Perhaps these factors could be combined, encouraging exploration of future energy production and its environmental footprint?

Exterior Elements

Play

Our initial introduction to learning in Visaginas was the highly centralised and regimented knowledge practices rooted in INPP. However, we were struck by the playful approach of contemporary education in the town. For example: exploration of surrounding nature through active tourism, holiday camps for the regional disabled community, creative story corners for early-stage learning at the existing library, Urban Stories' sound maps of the city, Tochka's support of alternative youth culture, and the technical college's emphasis on an experimental attitude to practical work.

The metal play elements left surrounding the kindergarten likely date from the same era as the 'cosmos' play equipment removed from nearby as a relic of the Soviet past. Instead, we might see these elements as precursors to Visaginas' evolving reputation as an open and explorative place of learning.
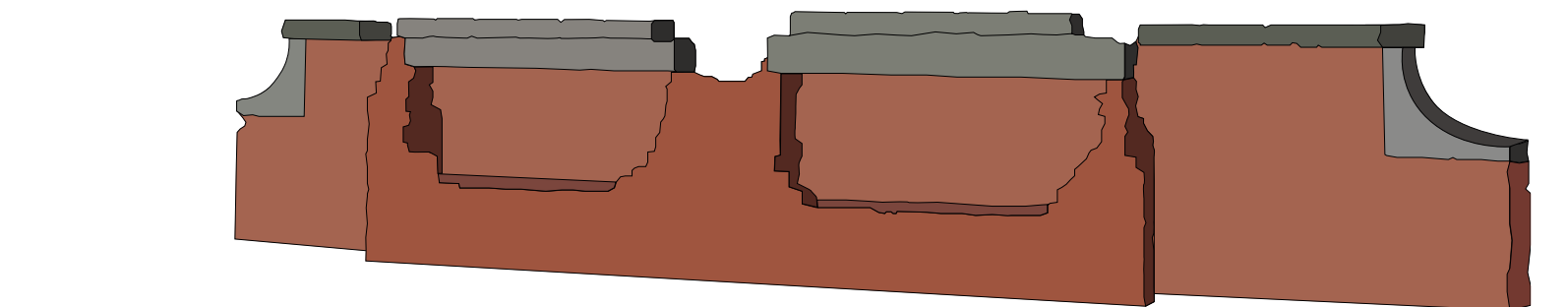
Perspective

We found fragments of wall that face the former kindergarten from different angles, each with the same form similar to a two-seated bench. We imagined them transformed into unique seating elements, effectively a dispersed extension to the process of architectural preservation. They would offer a place to rest, but also to question what we mean by heritage, and the forms of archival activity that support it. More than creating a static 'monument' to the past, they are surely also about commitment to a persistent questioning of perspective.

3. Knowledge Infrastructures
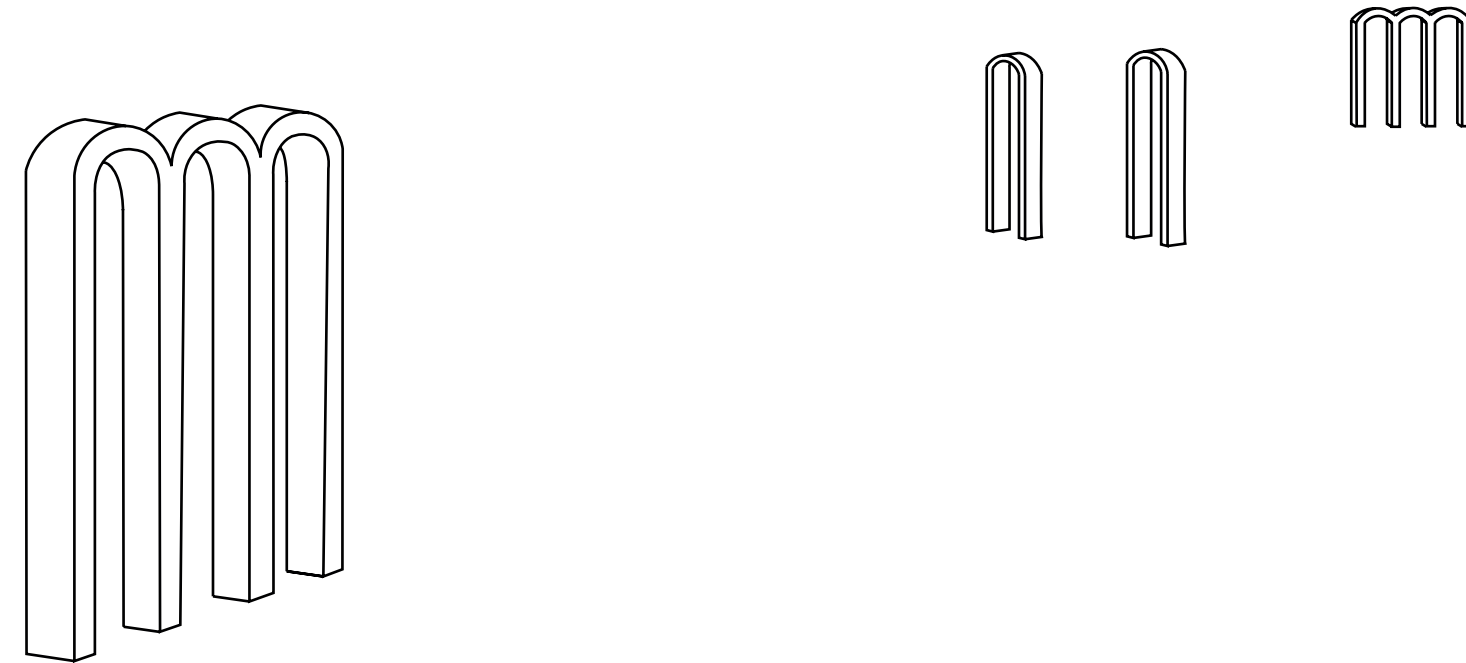
Underpinning our work in Visaginas has been the term 'knowledge infrastructures', an analytical framework for addressing knowledge production at the intersection of localized relations and broader forces of socio-technological change. In doing so, we started by examining the town's nuclear roots and questioning how its past remains relevant to current knowledge practices.

The most obvious example was INPP itself who's decommissioning demands continued reliance on old specializations, but also the generation of new expertise – know-how that is then exported in the form of international consultancy. As such, INPP remains an active and evolving part of multi-scalar knowledge infrastructures. In fact, the legacy of the town's nuclear foundations far exceeds the plant itself. INPP's Soviet-era provision of high level technical training, abundant welfare, and emphasis on a strong sports culture, continues to influence Visaginas' educational strengths.

However, following the plant's closure, adaptation of old knowledge practices to new ends has become critical to the community's future. Moreover, this is no longer the responsibility of a single centralised authority, but rather requires an inter-institutional approach. As such, we suggest that the role of the new library is best understood as part of a wider educational whole: Visaginas' 'knowledge core'. In this final section we tie together the zoning practices and architectural analysis developed through previous chapters, with emphasis on the relationship between the new library, town archive, and the seeds of a town museum. We propose a 'trail' as a possible infrastructural tool for thinking these elements as more than the sum of their separate institutional parts.
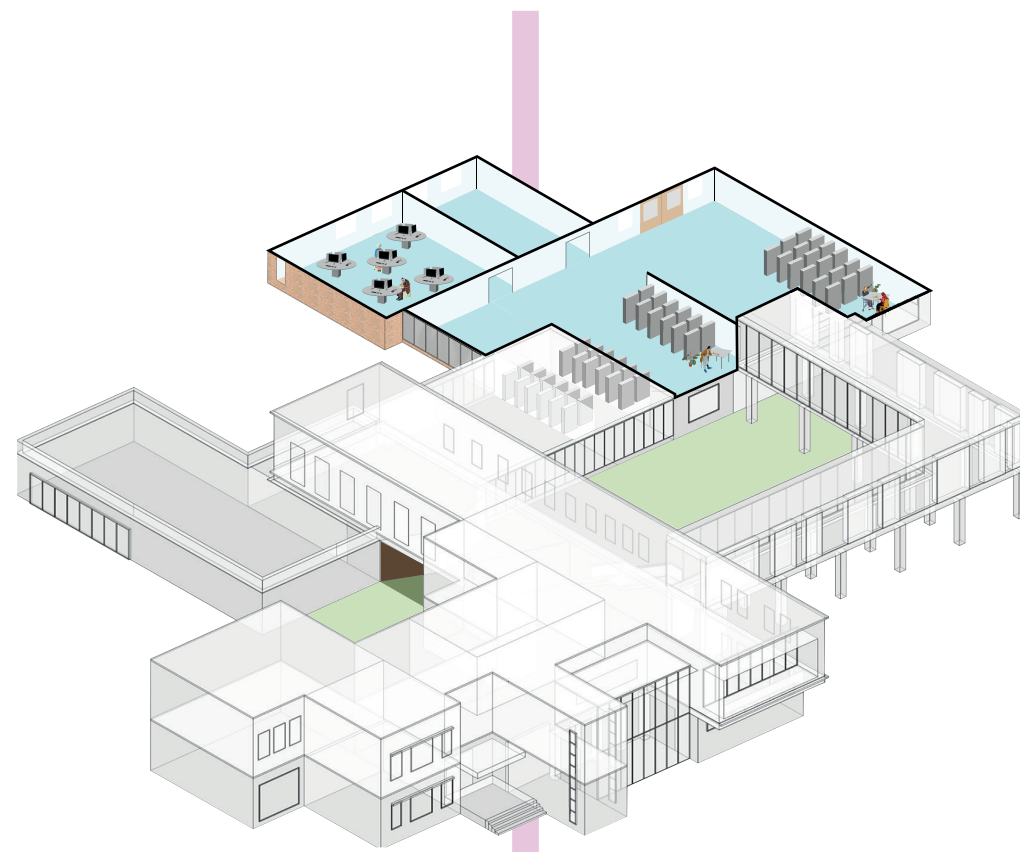
Spaces in Common

Library & Archive

Central to our suggestions for the functional programming of the library is the integration of 'traditional' and 'new' forms of knowledge practices. Our aim was to achieve common space not through collapsing differences, but creating dialogue between the values underpinning them. In turn, this continued to make evident strong conceptual ties between the future of the library and development of the town archive.

Proposals

We suggest situating more traditional library functions in the building's north-eastern corner, and the construction of a new entrance facing the cultural centre. This would link together two institutions well-used by older members of the community, whilst forming an educational corridor with the school beyond. Concentrating public services on the ground floor supports universal access, so we suggest reserving the first floor for administrative and storage purposes – potentially linked to the municipal archive.
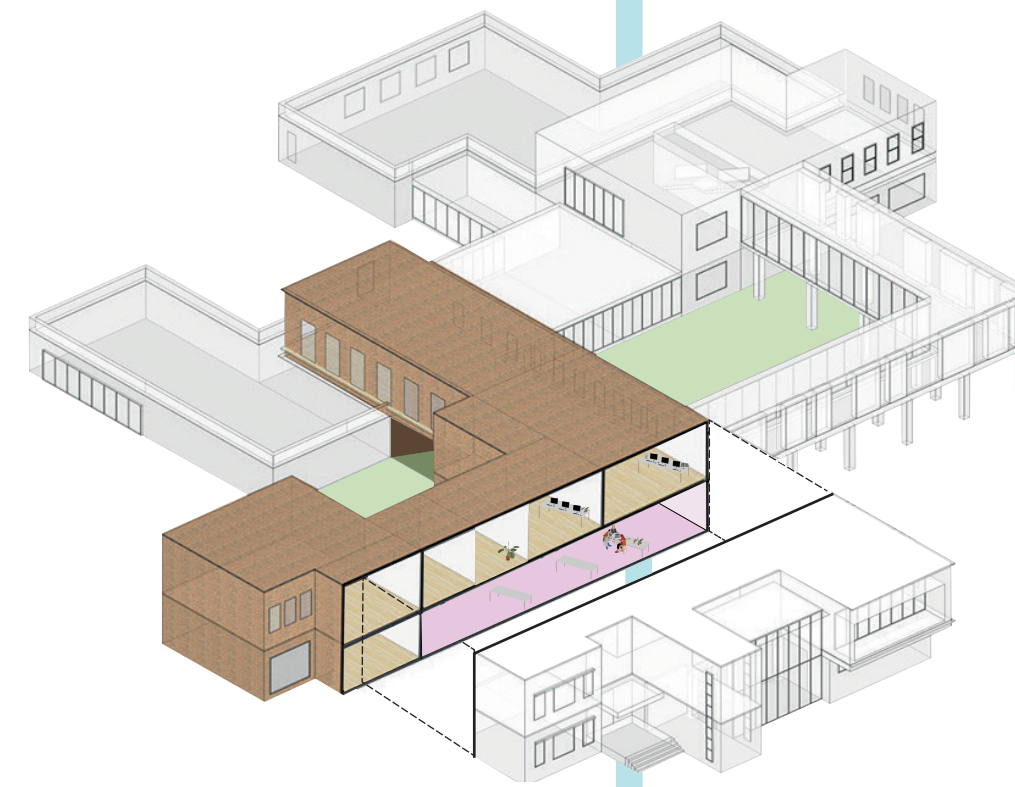
We propose developing a more informal work space and café in the library's south wing. Easily accessible form Visaginas' technical college, the aim is to broaden the institution's appeal to both teenagers and young professionals – currently its least active user groups. Online subscriptions to contemporary publications would improve the relevance of literature for these readers, whilst rentable meeting rooms and co-working space on the first floor could help support a local freelance culture.

Observations

We noted book cases and desktop computers as the key elements structuring the current library's interior spaces. Large and static, they support a relatively limited range of spatial experiences. Yet, clearly, as tools for on- and offline browsing, these objects are important sites of encounter and curiosity. More subtly, by carving out shared space for otherwise solitary activities, they anchor quiet forms of sociality and security particularly amongst the elderly and the unemployed – both groups vulnerable to social and technological isolation.

However, increasing transition of reading and research practices online may well challenge the future of small-scale libraries. We strongly support their continued relevance as physical collections of 'knowledge objects', but suggest this is best secured through embracing diversity of 'knowledge practices'. For Visaginas, relocation of the library and the heritage value of its new site, invites close attention to the spatiality of such questions. Our design aims at balancing institutional continuity, with greater emphasis on the light and open-plan qualities evident in the library's small exhibition room.

Archive

The library is already responsible for key elements of the municipal archive, such as a large model town plan prominently on display. This maquette makes evident core values of 'traditional' library and archival functions. Strongly object-oriented and supporting access to physical artefacts, they promote multi-sensory learning and respect for material cultures. Digital resources can help enhance, rather than displace, such strengths. For example, contributing the specificity of regional collections to wider knowledge communities enables diversification of discussion and debate.
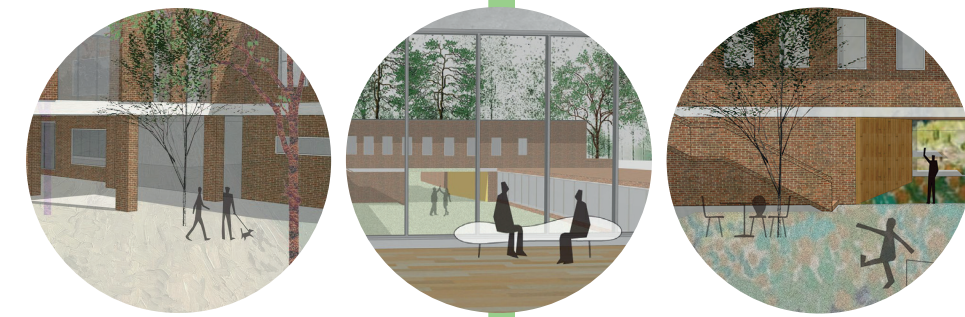
Given Visaginas' varied architectural composition, it is important to point to its built spaces as themselves integral to the archive. If the architectural elements our design cuts away were recycled as interior features, this would playfully highlight the new library's nuanced position between heritage artefact and a space for innovative thinking.

We suggest minimal furniture and an open-plan format in the south wing, so that it can easily host temporary events and exhibitions. Considering that curation of archival material will lie at the heart of the town museum, the library could support its development through providing space for early-stage curatorial experimentation and participatory community engagement.
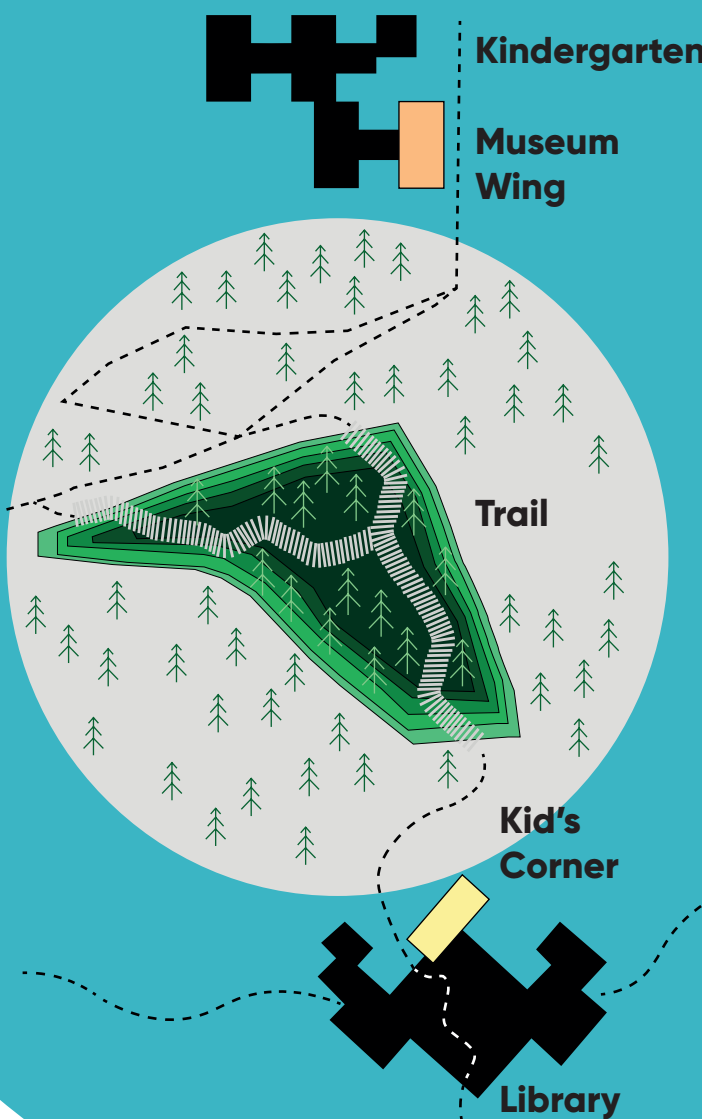
Inside Out, Outside In

Library, Museum & Trail

Ongoing plans for establishing a town museum have identified one wing of a kindergarten on Partizanų Street as a promising location. Lying in the immediate vicinity of the new library, we suggest curating a trail between the two sites that would add to an existing network of public footpaths by introducing a raised walkway.

Forming the spine of Visaginas' 'knowledge core', we imagine it as a site for outdoor installations in close dialogue with the surrounding nature. Expanding the range of institutional knowledge practices, the trail would also facilitate encounters between experimental learning and the daily life of the town.

Kindergarten

Museum Wing

Trail

Kid's Corner

Library

Narrative

The importance of a post-nuclear narrative was a recurrent topic of discussion with local representatives, during which we noted a striking diversity of approaches to narrative formation. The group 'We Are Visaginas' uses it a means to political change and entrepreneurial advancement, whilst the initiative 'Urban Stories' explores narrative as a multi-sensory and performative device for negotiating the built environment. Tourism company LitWild similarly adopts an experiential approach towards discussion of regional nature.

Critically, the assumed subject of these 'stories' is also being challenged. Pioneering holiday camps for disabled children foreground the importance of embracing physical difference. Meanwhile, the cyborg imaginaries explored at Tochka art residency or brought to mechatronic life at the technical college, radically expand our repertoire of potential protagonists.

The trail may be a simple structural element, but it is one that encourages heightened awareness of your surroundings and subtle shifts in perspective. This is precisely what links the diverse narratives of Visaginas together, and we suggest makes the trail an ideal tool for pioneering experimental knowledge assemblages.

Proposals

Between the new library and proposed museum wing there is a small wooded area characterised by an intersection of footpaths and an undulation in topography. We suggest exaggerating this detail through construction of a raised trail that would serve as a viewing deck for installations dispersed amongst the trees, which could be lit in the evening. This would form a clear inter-institutional tie, meaning that facilities such as the library café could easily be shared.
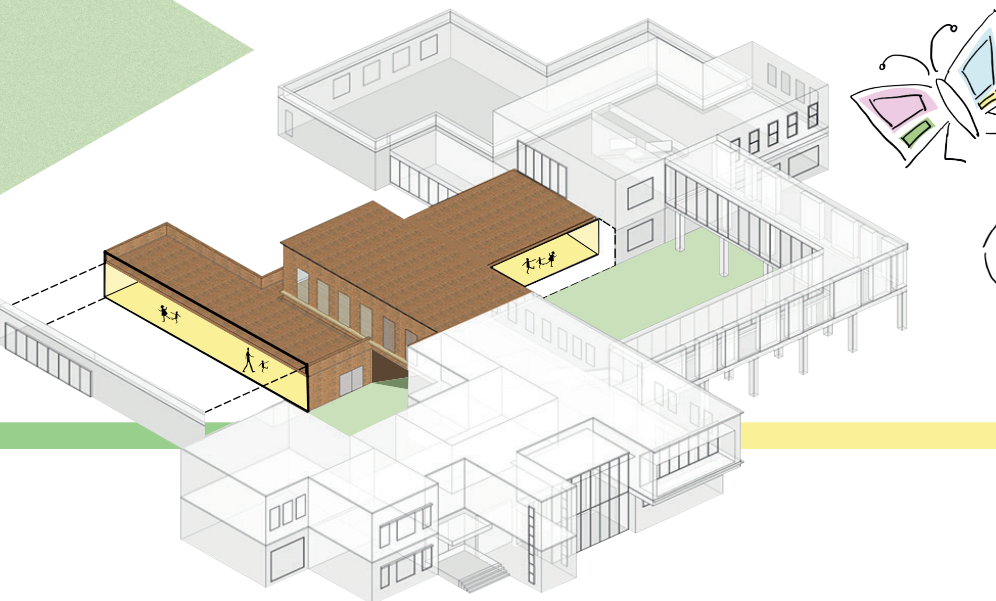
Our design shows a cut through the new library building, effectively incorporating the trail within the architecture itself. This opens out into a central courtyard with a balcony that mirrors the trail's passage-like movement. The design removes the first floor level from the wing designated 'kid's corner' to decrease the overall built volume, but also to allow more light to enter the courtyard from where you would be able to glimpse the trees beyond. Collectively such details serve to create an ambiguity of interior and exterior spaces.

We designated the wing facing the trail directly as a 'kid's corner' so that the trail can be incorporated within the creative story-telling practices the library already supports with strong reference to nature – it also creates a direct link with the kindergarten. Overall, our functional programming has outlined three principal interior zones which we have shown concentrated within separate wings of the building. A degree of separation allows for transitions in noise level and spatial organisation integral to different learning styles. Strong interplay of interior and exterior spaces, however, means that the courtyard and trail provide a forum between those differences.
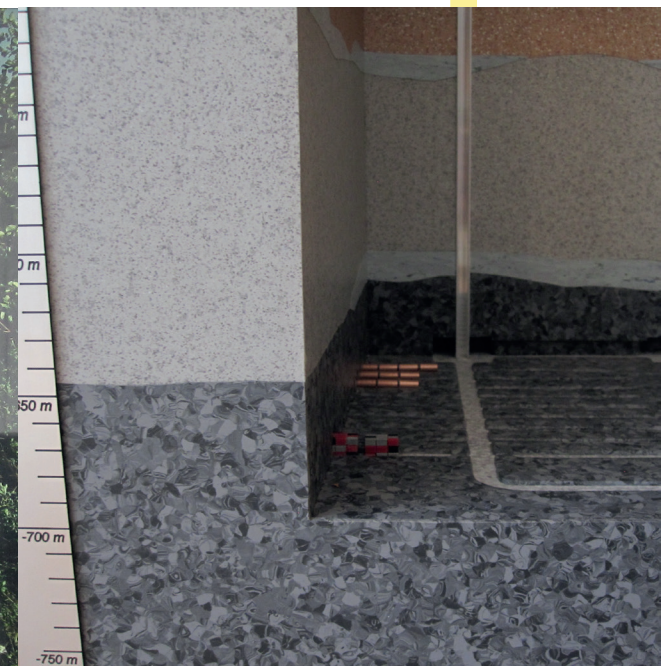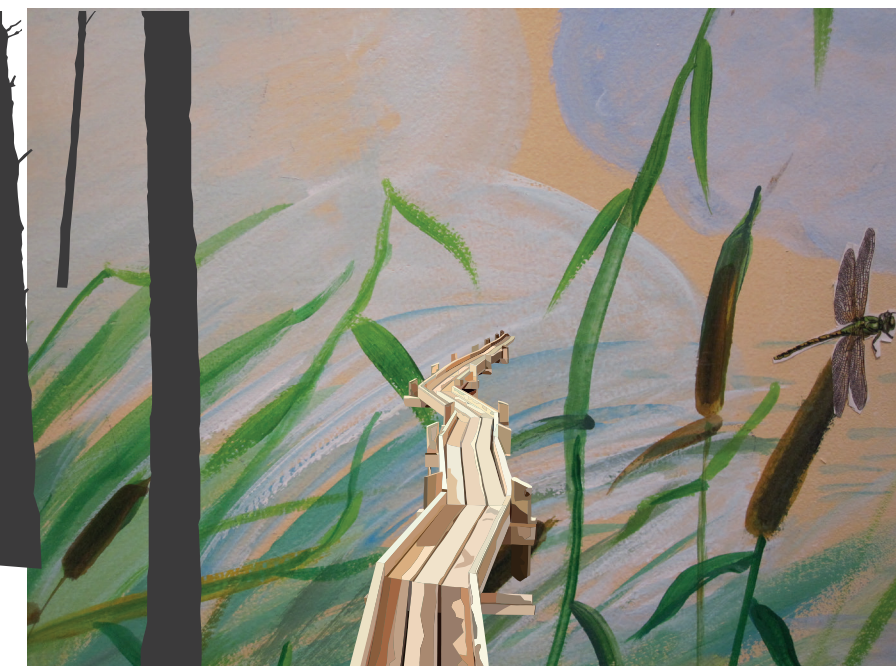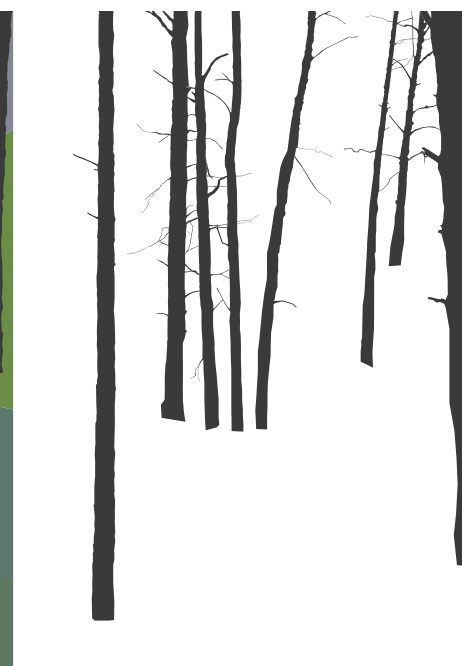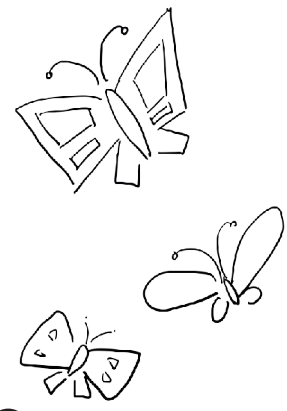
Conclusion

During our short time in Visaginas the relationship between our work, the town, and the library itself was ever-shifting and often unexpected. This project report has presented programming and design ideas for the new library, serving as a methodological toolkit we hope will be useful to local actors in their ongoing commitment to the community's future.

Summary

We explored existing educational infrastructures and library functions, whilst interviewing advocates of both cultural change and continuity. The result was a wide array of opinions which, for all their differences, made evident the strength of local commitment to the town. Throughout we were inspired by the diversity of creative expression encountered. From Parisian boulevards to cyberpunk portals and 'beach basketball', or archival interests spanning Alexandria to acrobatics, Visaginas was never quite what we anticipated.

However, it was only upon visiting the actual site of the new library, observing the quality of its existing architecture, and learning of its importance for many locals, that we began to establish a concrete proposition for bringing these voices together without collapsing their differences. Through careful reconstruction of the existing building, it would be possible to reduce its size and running costs without complete demolition. An architectural solution that is sensitive to the town's heritage, yet open to change, seems fitting to the needs of the community as a whole.

The relocation of the library is an important opportunity for questioning the trajectory of the surrounding district. We identified three prominent characteristics of activity in the immediate vicinity of the site - 'commercial', 'social', and 'green' - underpinned by a concentration of knowledge-oriented institutions which the new library and, potentially, the future town museum would add to.

By labelling this educational hub Visaginas' 'knowledge core' we aimed to create a focal point for change, and a forum for discussing its direction. This could include an outsider's perspective, exploring how visitors to the town might engage more fully with the services it offers, whilst cementing participatory inter-generational dialogue as to the meaning of heritage.

Connecting the library and the museum via an outside trail would help extend the functional and aesthetic value of these institutions beyond their walls, thereby foregrounding another principal point of local consensus: pride in Visaginas' proximity to nature. Blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior elements became central to our design, but perhaps it can also be understood as at the heart of what a library provides: space to question.